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DEPT FOR WHA/FO (C. MCCARRY)
BERLIN AND WARSAW PLEASE PASS TO C. MCCARRY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [CU](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: BELGIUM'S SUPPORT CONTINUED PRESSURE ON CUBA,
SKEPTICAL ABOUT HELMS-BURTON

REF: STATE 53623

Classified By: POLCOUNS THEODORE H. ANDREWS; reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) On April 23, polcouns and poloff discussed reftel with Ambassador VanDessel, Director for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Belgian MFA. Jean-Luc Bodson, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister, was present also. Ambassador VanDessel noted he was looking forward to his planned May 2 meeting to discuss Cuba with Caleb McCarry and DAS Madison, adding that Belgium agrees with the U.S. on the need to promote democratic reform and human rights. He explained further that while Cuba was obviously a primary concern for the US government given its proximity to the United States, the GOB understood USG concerns on the matter.

12. (SBU) The Belgian side also concurred that USG-sponsored outreach programs to Cuban civil society will contribute over the long-term to the development of a democratic Cuba. He declined to be drawn out on whether the GOB would follow suit with similar programs.

13. (C) In contrast, the Belgian side expressed a guardedly negative opinion on Helms-Burton. They specifically questioned its utility in transforming Cuban behavior. They believed that a more positive strategy of engagement would achieve more. In response to this, emboffs argued that the effects produced by the act are the best way to maintain pressure on the current and future regime to bring about changes in their policies on human rights and democracy.

14. (C) Regarding the GOB stance on the EU's Common Position on Cuba, he said that it would probably not be discussed by the EU until the fall. The GOB was almost entirely in line with the US stance and policies on Cuba. The Belgians thought the upcoming discussion would not change much from the last Common Position.

15. (C) In discussing the recent Moratino's visit, Ambassador VanDessel said Belgium's Foreign Minister had specifically cautioned against the trip. Responding to a query, they assured us there were no plans for any trips to Cuba by Belgian officials.

FOX

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